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28 July 1964

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

28 July 1964

DAILY BRIEF

***South Vietnam:** The Viet Cong continue to concentrate on terrorism this month, even though the number of large-scale Communist attacks is at an all-time high.

About two thirds of all reported Viet Cong incidents thus far during July fall under the category of terrorist activity. No change is apparent from past patterns of such activity, which primarily consist of harassing fire against government outposts and hamlets in the southern part of the country and intimidation of hamlets in the northern coastal area. Sabotage of land routes, including the coastal railroad, also remains at a high level.

Although there have been few recent instances of terrorist activity in the cities, there has been no letup in the countryside. Thus far this month some 25 rural officials have been murdered, while more than 70 have been kidnaped. This is the largest number of such kidnapings for this year.

The most recent large-scale military action, a company-size ambush in the central highlands, occurred on 23 July. There are tentative signs that the intensity of the Viet Cong military drive may be tapering off, even though government casualty rates and weapons lost to the Viet Cong were heavy during the past week.

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*USSR-Laos: Moscow may be preparing to play an even less active role as Geneva co-chairman on the Laos question.

In talks with British Foreign Secretary Butler beginning today in Moscow, the Soviet leaders probably will reiterate charges in their 26 July notes to the Geneva powers that US actions have made it impossible for the co-chairmen to fulfill their functions. The notes warned that if the latest Soviet proposal for a 14-nation conference next month is rejected, the USSR will be compelled to re-examine its co-chairman role, which has become "fictitious."

Since last spring Soviet behavior has reflected a desire to disengage as much as possible from a deteriorating situation in which the USSR has had little influence. The co-chairman functions at times have complicated Moscow's relations with the Pathet Lao, North Vietnamese, and Chinese, and have resulted in embarrassing displays of Soviet impotence.

The Soviets may believe President de Gaulle's 23 July statement, which excluded Britain from the four powers "bearing direct responsibility" in Indochina, provides a good opportunity to expand the forum of East-West contact on Laos from the co-chairmen to direct diplomatic exchanges among the interested powers.

Although it is unlikely that the Soviets intend to dissociate themselves entirely from the Geneva machinery, they probably believe that by following De Gaulle's lead they can increase pressure on Washington and London and avoid embarrassing divergencies with Hanoi and Peiping.

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NOTES

India: The Shastri government continues under heavy pressure to ease consumer distress brought on by shortages and rising prices of food grains. The tempo of demonstrations in various parts of the country is rising, most notably in western India, and state governments are attempting to force food speculators to sell hoarded supplies. A strike threatened by Bombay port workers would further aggravate the problem by slowing down unloading of PL 480 food supplies from the US.

UK: [The settlement of the two-week-old postal dispute appears to have removed this issue from the general election campaign and forestalled a serious blow to the economy. The agreement represents major concessions by the government to the Postal Union, which won wide popular sympathy for its demands. The rise in postal wages, which is higher than the average wage increase the government has sought to enforce, could lead to demands by other unions for similar increases.]

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